# A High Level Interface to the HDF5 File Format

*Release 717*

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**Abstract**

HL-HDF is a high level interface to the Heirarchical Data Format, version 5, developed and maintained by the HDF group at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA), at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. HDF5 is a file format designed for maximum flexibility and efficiency and it makes use of modern software technology. HDF5 sports such fundamental characteristics as platform independence and efficient built-in compression, and it can be used to store virtually any kind of scientific data. HL-HDF is designed to focus on selected HDF5 functionality and make it available to users at a high level of abstraction to make data management easier. This documentation contains an introduction to HL-HDF, compilation and installation instructions, and it describes how HL-HDF interacts with HDF5. A library reference provides information on how to use the software and assistance on creating user-defined data representations is also presented. A few example programs are provided as well. Finally, an interface between HL-HDF and the Python programming language is presented and documented.

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CHAPTER

ONE

# The W5 of HL-HDF

## 1.1 What?

HL-HDF is a high level interface to the Heirachical Data Format, version 5, developed and maintained by the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA), at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. HDF5 is a file format designed for a maximum of flexibility and efficiency and it makes use of modern software technology. Briefly, HDF5 has the following characteristics:

- Platform independence. For example, an array of native floating point values written on one platform will be automatically identified, byte-swapped if necessary, and returned as an array of native floating point values on another platform.
- Built-in compression using the free ZLIB compression library. ZLIB is well-known as the compression used in the gzip package and it is robust and efficient.
- Flexible. HDF5 offers the ability to store virtually any kind of scientific data.

The HDF5 project URL is http://hdf.ncsa.uiuc.edu/HDF5/ and links are available to source code, software and copious documentation.

HL-HDF is designed to focus on selected HDF5 functionality and make it available to users at a high level of abstraction, the idea being to make the management of their data easier. A strong effort has been made to ensure that this functionality, although a limited subset of HDF5 functionality, provides a general and flexible set of tools for managing arbitrary data. Like HDF5, HL-HDF is meant to be used on different computer platforms. In practise this means different flavours of UNIX and NT. HDF5 may work on other systems, like the Mac, DOS and VMS, but NCSA does not support them (yet) which means that HL-HDF does not support them either. This is not to say that they will not work on these platforms, however.

Binary tools available with HDF5 will work with files written with HL-HDF. For example, ‘`h5dump`’ can be used to determine the contents of an HDF5 file written with HL-HDF. A few test programs are included with HL-HDF which can read/write raw data to/from HDF5 files. These test programs may be useful to users who do not wish to write their own routines using the functionality available in HL-HDF, but would prefer to rely on a simpler encoder and decoder. These programs can also be used as examples of how to write routines using HL-HDF.

HL-HDF is free software and it may be used used by anyone according to SMHI’s and NCSA’s copyright statements containined in this document. Users are encouraged to report their feedback to the author, and to contribute to its development.

## 1.2 Why?

This software is designed to facilitate the management of scientific data from multiple sources. The integration of observations from various observational systems such as weather stations, satellites and radars is an area which is receiving increased attention. An increasing amount of work is also being carried out on integrating such observations with information from numerical models, and in assimilating the observations into the models. Unfortunately, most types of data are stored in different file formats and little effort has been made to facilitate the exchange of data between disciplines such as meteorology, hydrology and oceanography. Since SMHI is the national agency responsible for operational activities in all three of these disciplines, it would obviously be beneficial to these operations if a rationalization of data management procedures can be realized. This is the reason why the HL-HDF software has been developed.

Another important reason why HL-HDF has been developed is that it facilitates the management of multi-source data for pure research and development activities. This is due to the software's flexibility which provides a platform for managing virtually any variable and combination of variables imaginable.

Due to HDF5's platform independent nature, its use can even be considered for exchange between organizations, either domestically or internationally. Its built-in compression is efficient which increases the potential amount of data available in archives and helps make them more useful.

Why "release 717"? The European Co-Operation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research (COST) has recently launched a new Concerted Research Action number 717 called "Use of Radar Observations in Hydrological and NWP Models". Since COST 717 deals with integrating data from multiple sources in ways which HL-HDF is designed to facilitate, SMHI has committed HL-HDF as a contribution to this Action. Hence the release version 717...

## 1.3 Where?

HL-HDF has been developed for use in three general areas:

1. General purpose research and development.
2. Data management. HL-HDF can be used wherever there are requirements put on managing scientific data, whether it be with a small amount of data by a single person or with a comprehensive archive by a large organization.
3. Data exchange. HL-HDF can be used almost anywhere data exchange is required. This can be within an organization or between organizations, either domestically or internationally.

## 1.4 When?

HL-HDF has been developed during the first half of 2000 on a small budget as a one-off pilot project. This means that there is no ongoing project group and no official support. The objective has been to develop HL-HDF and then release it for anyone to use as he or she pleases. Feedback is naturally welcome to the e-mail address on this document's front page, and we hope to be able to incorporate improvements as best we can.

The timing of HL-HDF has been fortunate. Had we gotten underway earlier, we probably would have chosen HDF4. Had we waited until later, then several of our applications may have chosen inferiour file formats. It feels as though this work has been done in the right place at the right time.

## 1.5 Who?

Who can use HL-HDF? Anyone who works with scientific data can use HL-HDF, whether it be research and development with a limited amount of data or management of vast volumes of data in operational environments.

Who has worked on this project? The programming has been performed by Anders Henja from Adcore, Norrköping. Daniel Michelson has coordinated the project. Mike Folk and Quincey Koziol of the HDF group at the NCSA have also been very helpful. An “ad hoc reference group” has followed the project’s progress. This group consists of the following people:

| | |
|---|---|
| Øystein Godøy | The Norwegian Meteorological Institute |
| Harri Hohti | Finnish Meteorological Institute |
| Otto Hyvärinen | Finnish Meteorological Institute |
| Pirkko Pylkkö | Finnish Meteorological Institute |
| Per Kållberg | European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting and SMHI |
| Hans Alexandersson | SMHI |
| Bengt Carlsson | SMHI |
| Adam Dybbroe | SMHI |
| Jörgen Sahlberg | SMHI |

CHAPTER

**TWO**

# Compilation and Installation

## 2.1 Requirements

The Heirarchical Data Format, version 5, must be built and accessible. Source code and prebuilt releases of HDF5 are available from the National Centre for Supercomputing Applications at ftp://hdf.ncsa.uiuc.edu/HDF5/. Follow the documentation from NCSA if you plan on building HDF5 yourself.

An extremely important requirement is that an ANSI-compliant C compiler be used. Some native compilers cannot handle ANSI C and HL-HDF will therefore not build.

### UNIX

A number of GNU tools are required, or at least highly recommended, in order to build HL-HDF. These tools are:
`gzip` (including zlib), version 1.1.0 or higher
`tar`
`make`, GNU Make version 3.7x or higher (or compatible)
all of which are available from http://www.gnu.org/. GNU C (and Fortran) compilers can also be retrieved from this site.

In order for `gzip` to work, the ZLIB compression library must be compiled and installed. ZLIB is available at http://www.cdrom.com/pub/infozip/zlib/.

### Windows NT

The free WiZ package, available from http://www.cdrom.com/pub/infozip/WiZ.html, or the proprietary WinZip package, available from http://www.winzip.com/, should be installed and accessible. If you choose to link in the pre-compiled HDF5 libs, then you'll have to use the Microsoft Visual C++ compiler, since this is what was used to build the HDF5 package.

### Mac

No support yet.

### VMS

No support yet.

## 2.2 Compilation

Make sure that all the requirements presented in the previous Section are met.

### UNIX

The first step is to unpack the distribution. For ths purposes of this documentation, the path '/usr/local/src' will be the root of the installation. Unpack the distribution with

```
/usr/local/src % tar xvzf hlhdf_r717.tgz
```

This will create a directory called 'hlhdf' and the distribution will be placed in it. If the above arguments fail, then you have not used GNU tar.

HL-HDF has a `configure` script to determine paths to compilers, headers and libraries. In short it tries to find everything HL-HDF needs to be built.

Execute the 'configure' script. The most relevant arguments are:

| | |
|---|---|
| `--prefix=PATH` | Set the root of the installation path. Defaults to '/usr/local/hlhdf'. |
| `--with-zlib=INC,LIB` | Use GNU ZLIB compression headers located at `INC` and library located at `LIB`. |
| `--with-hdf5=INC,LIB` | Use the HDF5 headers located at `INC` and libraries located at `LIB`. |
| `--with-python=yes\|no` | Configure in Python support. Default is `yes`. Enables building a Python interface. |
| `--with-fortran=yes\|no` | Configure with Fortran. Default is `no`. Useful if integrating with F77 code. |

There are a few more arguments and they are listed by executing

```
/usr/local/src/hlhdf % ./configure -help
```

If 'configure' fails, which is unlikely, then you may be in trouble. See Section 2.5 for platform-specific notes. The bottom line is that you may have to make some manual adjustments to your configuration files.

If configuration has been carried out without any problems then you're ready to build HL-HDF with:

```
/usr/local/src/hlhdf % make
```

This will generate the library 'libhlhdf.a' located in the '/usr/local/src/hlhdf/hlhdf' directory.

### Windows NT

Unpack the distribution using WiZ or WinZip. The following build instructions apply to the Microsoft Visual C++ 6.0 compiler.

1. Start a new project by selecting "File - New - Projects - Win32 Static Library". Add appropriate *Project name* (hlhdf) and *Location* in this same window. No precompiled headers or MFC support is needed.
2. Tools - Options - Directories. Make sure you add the path to the HDF5 header files.
3. Project - Add to Project - Files. Go to where the source and header files for HL-HDF are located and add them all.
4. Project - Settings - C/C++. Set appropriate warning level and optimization.
5. Build - Build hlhdf.lib

This should generate the file 'hlhdf.lib' in the 'Debug' directory.

## 2.3 Testing

### UNIX

An optional testing of the HL-HDF library may be performed by compiling a test program located in the '/usr/local/src/hlhdf/test' directory.

Simply move to this directory and type

```
/usr/local/src/hlhdf/test % make
```

which should build the test program 'testRaveObject'. This program can be used to test read or test write an artificial image along with a number of different kinds of header parameters. To test the reading, execute

```
/usr/local/src/hlhdf/test % testRaveObject read
```

and an ASCII representation of the contents of 'rave_image_file.hdf' will be written to `stdout`.

To test writing, execute

```
/usr/local/src/hlhdf/test % testRaveObject write
```

and and an ASCII representation of the contents of 'rave_image_file.hdf' will be written to `stdout` and the file itself will be re-written.

Alternatively, if 'rave_image_file.hdf' doesn't exist, execute the test program with the `write` argument first to create the file, and then `read` it to examine its contents.

If this test program works, then you can be confident that the HL-HDF library works! (The above use of "rave" in the test program and file refers to Radar Analysis and Visualization Environment software, which is freely available software maintained by SMHI).

### Windows NT

Testing involves creating a new project in Microsoft Visual C++. This same strategy should be applied when building the 'hlenc', 'hldec' and 'hllist' binaries.

1. Start a new project by selecting "File - New - Projects - Win32 Console Application". Add appropriate *Project name* (test) and *Location* in this same window. Then select "An empty project".
2. Tools - Options - Directories. Add paths to the HL-HDF header files and the newly build library 'hlhdf.lib'. Make sure the paths to the HDF5 headers and library are there as well.
3. Project - Add to Project - Files. Go to where 'test_raveobject.c' is located and add it.
4. Project - Settings - C/C++. Set appropriate warning level and optimization.
5. Project - Settings - Link - Object/library modules. Add 'hlhdf.lib hdf5.lib zlib.lib' in this order to the beginning of this list.
6. Build - Build test.exe

7. Open a DOS console and change to the directory containing 'test.exe'. Execute `test write` to create an HDF test file. Execute `test read` to query the contents of this file. If this works, then you can be confident that your HL-HDF library works.

## 2.4 Installation

### UNIX

Execute

```
/usr/local/src/hlhdf % make install
```

and the header files, libraries, binaries, scripts and an MK-file will be installed to the 'include', 'lib', 'bin' and 'mkf' directories located under the path specified by the `prefix` variable which was used when HL-HDF was build. HL-HDF is complete when this has been carried out. For information on how to compile and install the Python interface, see Chapter 7.2

### Windows NT

A specific installation has not been defined. It is up to the user to place the headers, library, and binaries in appropriate locations.

## 2.5 Platform Notes

HL-HDF has been built on a number of systems, most of which are different flavours of UNIX. Unfortunately HDF5 is not available for any form of VMS or other arcane operating system such as DOS. What follows is a collection of platform-specific notes.

*If the pre-compiled binaries are installed, the file 'mkf/hldef.mk' has to be modified manually to point to the locations of the HDF5 installation, the ZLIB installation, the compiler, etc.*

### Red Hat Linux 6.2

**Platform:** Linux 2.2.14-5.0 #1 Tue Mar 7 21:07:39 EST 2000 i686 unknown

**C Compiler:** egcs-2.91.66

**Notes:** gcc should be at least version 2.8.1 when using HDF5 1.2.2. HL-HDF was developed using Red Hat 5.2 with gcc version 2.7.2.3 and HDF5 1.2.0.

### Sun

**Platform:** SunOS 5.7 Generic sun4u sparc SUNW,Ultra-5_10

**C Compiler:** Sun WorkShop Compiler C Version 4

**Notes:** Debugging platform (Purify).

### DEC Alpha

**Platform:** OSF1 V4.0 878 alpha

**C Compiler:** DEC C V5.6-071 on Digital UNIX V4.0 (Rev. 878)

### HP-UX

**Platform:** HP-UX B.10.20 E 9000/778

**C Compiler:** HP, native C-compiler with ANSI support.

**Notes:** It is absolutely vital that the C compiler be ANSI-compliant. Some native HP compilers are not and this may cause the compilation of HL-HDF to fail. A PyHL binary distribution was not built on this platform.

### SGI

**Platform:** IRIX64 6.5 07151439 IP27

**C Compiler:** MIPSpro Compilers: Version 7.2.1.3m

**Notes:** When using the configure script, the linker options *-Bstatic* and *-Bdynamic* are valid. Compiling the '_pyhlmodule.so' module failed however. It might be necessary to remove the *$(LD_FORCE_STATIC)* and *$(LD_FORCE_SHARE)* arguments from the *LIBRARIES* variable in the PyHL 'Makefile'. Otherwise, the SGI compiler is very sensitive to the cleanliness of the code and requires tons of arguments to shut up:

```
CFLAGS= -woff 1174,1429,1209,1196,1685 -woff 799,803,835 -Wl,-woff,47,-woff,84,-
woff,85,-woff,134
```

Add these arguments to the end of your *CFLAGS* variable. This list may not be complete.

**Notes:** FMI is gratefully acknowledged for letting use one of their machines.

### Cray T3E

**Platform:** sn6326 2.0.4.90 unicosmk CRAY T3E

**C Compiler:** Cray Standard C Version 6.3.0.2

**Notes:** A PyHL binary distribution was not built on this platform.

### Cray C90

**Platform:** sn4004 9.0.2.8 roo.13 CRAY C90

**C Compiler:** Cray Standard C Version 4.0.4.0

**Notes:** A PyHL binary distribution was not built on this platform.

### Windows NT

**Platform:** Intel Pentium II with NT 4.00.1381

**C Compiler:** Microsoft Visual C++ 6.0

**Notes:** In order to compile the 'hlenc', 'hldec' and 'hllist' binaries, the file 'getopt.c' must be compiled in with the project(s). A PyHL binary distribution was not built on this platform.

CHAPTER

# THREE

# Fundamentals

This Chapter presents HL-HDF's building blocks so that the user will have a knowledge of the proper terminology prior to working hands-on with the library. To make the most of the functionality in HL-HDF, users should have a working knowledge of the C programming language.

This documentation is designed to be complimentary to the official HDF5 documentation and users should refer to the official set for more detail on HDF5's internal mechanisms.

## 3.1 The Heirarchy

The "H" in HDF stands for "Heirarchical" and this describes how HDF files are structured. An HDF file can be likened to a file system. At the root of the file system is a period (".") or a slash ("/") and the file may consist of an arbitrary number of levels of data, like subdirectories in a file system. For example, if a NOAA satellite image containing several spectral bands of data are stored in this manner, one way of doing so could look like this:

```
.
/NOAA 14/
/NOAA 14/info
/NOAA 14/info/xsize
/NOAA 14/info/ysize
/NOAA 14/Channel 1/
/NOAA 14/Channel 2/
/NOAA 14/Channel 3/
```

where `info` is an object containing header information. The same strategy could be used to store several polar scans of weather radar data, for example.

Alternatively, a numerical weather prediction model state could be represented in part using GRIB descriptors like this:

```
.
/Level 0/
/Level 0/Type 105/
/Level 0/Type 105/Parameter 11/
/Level 0/Type 102/
/Level 31/
/Level 31/Type 109/
/Level 31/Type 109/Parameter 11/
```

Or, why not a point from a weather station containing wind speed and direction values:

```
.
/WMO 02064/
/WMO 02064/dd/
/WMO 02064/ff/
/WMO 02036/
```

## 3.2 HL-HDF Building Blocks

HL-HDF provides a number of building blocks which are defined in detail in the header file 'vhlhdf.h'.

### Datatype

A `Datatype` is a data representation consisting of atomic data types such as a string, byte, integer, floating point value of a given word size, or in the form of a C `struct` containing combinations of atomic types. A `Datatype` is used to describe the characteristics of one's data, and a number of `Datatypes` may collectively constitute a header. Every `Datatype` is given a name which is stored in a string; this string is used to represent the `Datatype` in the HDF file.

### Attribute

An `Attribute` contains a string used to identify it, an array with up to four dimensions, and a number of `Datatypes` describing that `Attribute`.

An `Attribute` is an appropriate object for storing point values, for example, and storing time series of them is enabled in the `Attribute` object.

### Dataset

A `Dataset` is a higher level object and contains a string used to identify it, an optional array with between one and four dimensions, an array of `Datatypes`, and an array of `Attributes`.

A `Dataset` is an appropriate object for storing profile (transect) or image data, and it can be used to store time series of a given variable.

### Group

A `Group` is the highest level object and consists of a string used to identify it and an arbitrary combination of any of the `Datatype`, `Attribute`, `Dataset`, and `Group` building blocks. The root of any HDF5 file (denoted with "." or "/") is always a `Group`.

### Node

A `Node` is a term used in the HL-HDF code to refer to any of the above mentioned building blocks in an HDF5 file. In other words, any given object in the heirarchy is a `Node`.

### Scalar

A `Scalar` is an individual value.

### Atomic

In HDF5 the predefined datatypes (for example 'int', 'short', ...) are referred to as `Atomic`, as opposed to the `Compound` datatypes which are a combination of `Atomic` datatypes.

## 3.3 C Header Definitions

The previous section presented the principles of HL-HDF building blocks. This section presents their actual names and their definitions, along with some fundamentals from HDF5 itself.

### hid_t

This variable comes from HDF5 and is a type for managing references to nodes. Each node reference is represented as an integer and *hid_t* keeps track of them.

### herr_t

This variable comes from HDF5 and is a type for handling error codes.

### hsize_t

This variable comes from HDF5 and represents a native multiple-precision integer.

### HL_type

This is an enumeration variable designed to identify the type of a given node. *HL_type* can be any of following possible values:

```
UNDEFINED_ID=-1
ATTRIBUTE_ID=0
GROUP_ID=1
DATASET_ID=2
TYPE_ID=3
```

### HL_DataType

This is an enumeration variable designed to identify the type of data in a given node. *HL_DataType* can be any of the following possible values:

```
DTYPE_UNDEFINED_ID=-1
HL_SIMPLE=0
HL_ARRAY=1
```

When new nodes are initiated, they contain *HL_DataType=DTYPE_UNDEFINED*.

## HL_NodeMark

This is an enumeration variable designed to keep track of the status of a given node. *HL_NodeMark* can be any of the following possible values:

```
NMARK_ORIGINAL=0
NMARK_CHANGED=1
NMARK_SELECT=2
```

A node with *HL_NodeMark=NMARK_CHANGED* can be used to mark that it has been modified. A node with *HL_NodeMark=NMARK_SELECT* can be used to mark a node for modification.

## HL_Node

This is a single node and is defined in the following structure:

```
typedef struct HL_Node {
   HL_Type type;         /* the type of node */
   char name[256];       /* the node's name */
   int ndims;            /* the number of dimensions in the array */
   hsize_t dims[4];      /* the dimensions of each of ndims */
   unsigned char* data;  /* actual  data */
   char format[64];      /* the string representation of the data type */
   hid_t typeId;         /* reference to HDF's internal type management */
   size_t dSize;         /* size of one value in data */
   HL_DataType dataType;/* identifies whether data is single or an array */
   hid_t hdfId;          /* like typeId: for internal use */
   HL_NodeMark mark;     /* is this node marked? */
   HL_CompoundTypeDescription* compoundDescription; /* a list of compound
type descriptions*/
} HL_Node;
```

## HL_NodeList

This type is a list of nodes and is structured like this:

```
typedef struct {
   char filename[256];  /* a file string */
   char tmp_name[512];  /* temporary names for internal use */
   int nNodes;          /* the number of nodes in the list */
   int nAllocNodes;     /* the number of allocated nodes in the list; internal */
   HL_Node** nodes;     /* the nodes themselves */
} HL_NodeList;
```

## HL_CompoundTypeAttribute

This type is designed to describe an individual node with a complicated structure, ie. one which consists of more than atomic data types. It contains all the information required to interpret the contents of the node:

```
typedef struct {
   char attrname[256];  /* the Attribute's name */
   size_t offset;       /* the offset to where the data begins */
   char format[256];    /* the string representation of the atomic data type */
   int ndims;           /* the number of dimensions in the array */
   size_t dims[4];      /* the dimensions of each of ndims */
} HL_CompoundTypeAttribute;
```

### HL_CompoundTypeDescription

This type is a list of *HL_CompoundTypeAttribute*s. The reason why it's called "Description" is that it acts more like meta data than actual data, since it's just a collection of other nodes which may contain data, and is therefore more of a description than anything else. It is structured like this:

```
typedef struct {
   char typename[256];          /* the list's name */
   unsigned long objno[2];      /* markers used to tag nodes in the list */
   size_t size;                 /* size of this data type */
   int nAttrs;                  /* the number of attributes in the list */
   int nAllocAttrs;             /* the number of allocated attributes */
   HL_CompoundTypeAttribute** attrs; /* the attributes themselves */
} HL_CompoundTypeDescription;
```

CHAPTER

FOUR

# Library Reference

What follows is a list of HL-HDF C functions, along with their arguments and descriptions on how to use them. The functions given in this section are those declared in the header files in the HL-HDF source. The functions are grouped according to what they are designed to do.

## 4.1 General functions

### initHlHdf

`void` **`initHlHdf`**`()`

Initiates the HL-HDF functions. This call must be made before anything else is done. Returns nothing.

### disableErrorReporting

`void` **`disableErrorReporting`**`()`

Deactivates HDF5 debugging. Returns nothing.

### enableErrorReporting

`void` **`enableErrorReporting`**`()`

Activates HDF5 debugging. Returns nothing.

### debugHlHdf

`void` **`debugHlHdf`**`(`*int flag*`)`

Sets the debug mode. *flag* can be 0 (no debugging), 1 (debug only HL-HDF), or 2 (debug HL-HDF and HDF5). Returns nothing.

### isHdf5File

`int` **`isHdf5File`**`(`*const char* filename*`)`

Checks whether *filename* is an HDF5 file. Returns 1 if it is and 0 otherwise.

## openHlHdfFile

`hid_t` **`openHlHdfFile`** `(`*const char* filename,const char* how*`)`

Opens an HDF5 file. Arguments:

*filename*: String containing the files name.

*how*: What mode that should be used for opening the file, can be 'r' (read only), 'w' (write only) or 'rw' (read and write). Returns the `hid_t` reference upon success otherwise -1.

## createHlHdfFile

`hid_t` **`createHlHdfFile`** `(`*const char* filename*`)`

Creates an HDF5 file *filename*, if the file already exists it will be truncated. *filename* is the name of the file to be created. Returns the `hid_t` reference upon success otherwise -1.

## closeHlHdfFile

`herr_t` **`closeHlHdfFile`** `(`*hid_t file_id*`)`

Closes the HDF5 file with the `hid_t` reference *file_id*. Returns a value greater or equal to 0 upon success otherwise a negative value.

## getFixedType

`hid_t` **`getFixedType`** `(`*hid_t type*`)`

Translates from the datatype specified by *type* to a native datatype. Returns the native datatype `hid_t` upon success, or a negative value on failure.

## translateCharToDatatype

`hid_t` **`translateCharToDatatype`** `(`*const char* dataType*`)`

Creates an HDF5 datatype `hid_t` from the string representation *dataType*. *dataType* can be one of: `char`, `schar`, `uchar`, `short`, `ushort`, `int`, `uint`, `long`, `ulong`, `llong`, `ullong`, `float`, `double`, `hsize`, `hssize`, `herr` or `hbool`. Returns a value $<0$ upon failure, otherwise a `hid_t` reference to the new type.

## getTypeNameString

`char*` **`getTypeNameString`** `(`*hid_t type*`)`

Translates the HDF5 type *type* to an HDF5 string representation of the datatype. The returned string can be one of:

```
H5T_STD_I8BE, H5T_STD_I8LE, H5T_STD_I16BE, H5T_STD_I16LE,
H5T_STD_I32BE, H5T_STD_I32LE, H5T_STD_I64BE, H5T_STD_I64LE,
H5T_STD_U8BE, H5T_STD_U8LE, H5T_STD_U16BE, H5T_STD_U16LE,
H5T_STD_U32BE, H5T_STD_U32LE, H5T_STD_U64BE, H5T_STD_U64LE,
H5T_NATIVE_SCHAR, H5T_NATIVE_UCHAR, H5T_NATIVE_SHORT,
H5T_NATIVE_USHORT, H5T_NATIVE_INT, H5T_NATIVE_UINT,
H5T_NATIVE_LONG, H5T_NATIVE_ULONG, H5T_NATIVE_LLONG,
H5T_NATIVE_ULLONG, H5T_IEEE_F32BE, H5T_IEEE_F32LE,
H5T_IEEE_F64BE, H5T_IEEE_F64LE, H5T_NATIVE_FLOAT,
H5T_NATIVE_DOUBLE, H5T_NATIVE_LDOUBLE, H5T_STRING or
H5T_COMPOUND.
```

Returns the string representation upon success, otherwise NULL.

## getFormatNameString

`char*` **getFormatNameString** (*hid_t type*)

Translates the HDF5 type *type* to a HL-HDF string representation of the datatype. The returned string can be one of *dataType* can be one of `char`, `schar`, `uchar`, `short`, `ushort`, `int`, `uint`, `long`, `ulong`, `llong`, `ullong`, `float`, `double`, `hsize`, `hssize`, `herr`, `hbool`, `string` or `compound`. Returns the string representation upon success, otherwise NULL.

## getStringPadName

`char*` **getStringPadName** (*hid_t type*)

Returns a string representation of the type *type*'s padding. The returned string can be one of `H5T_STR_NULLTERM`,`H5T_STR_NULLPAD`,`H5T_STR_SPACEPAD` or `ILLEGAL STRPAD`. Returns the string representation upon success, otherwise NULL.

## getStringCsetName

`char*` **getStringCsetName** (*hid_t type*)

Returns a string representation of the type *type*'s character set. The returned string can be one of `H5T_CSET_ASCII` or `UNKNOWN CHARACTER SET`. Returns the string representation upon success, otherwise NULL.

## getStringCtypeName

`char*` **getStringCtypeName** (*hid_t type*)

Returns a string representation of the type *type*'s character type. The returned string can be one of `H5T_C_S1`, `H5T_FORTRAN_S1` or `UNKNOWN CHARACTER TYPE`. Returns the string representation upon success, otherwise NULL.

## whatSizeIsHdfFormat

`int` **whatSizeIsHdfFormat** (*const char* format*)

Calculates the size in bytes that the specified type takes. The attribute *format* can be one of `char`, `schar`, `uchar`, `short`, `ushort`, `int`, `uint`, `long`, `ulong`, `llong`, `ullong`, `float`, `double`, `hsize`, `hssize`, `herr` or `hbool`. Returns the size in bytes if successful or -1 in case of failure.

## isFormatSupported

`int` **isFormatSupported** (*const char* format*)

Checks wether the string type *format* is recognized. *format* can be one of `char`, `schar`, `uchar`, `short`, `ushort`, `int`, `uint`, `long`, `ulong`, `llong`, `ullong`, `float`, `double`, `hsize`, `hssize`, `herr` or `hbool`. Returns 1 if the *format* is supported, otherwise 0.

## newHL_Node

`HL_Node*` **newHL_Node** (*const char* name*)

Defines a new, empty node of undefined type. *name* is a string used to identify the node.

Returns the node if successful or *NULL* upon failure.

## newHL_NodeList

`HL_NodeList*` **`newHL_NodeList`**`()`

Creates an empty HL node list which can be filled with an arbitrary number of nodes.

Returns the node list if successful or *NULL* upon failure.

## freeHL_Node

`void` **`freeHL_Node`**`(`*HL_Node* node*`)`

Frees a node from memory. The node is given as the only argument.

Returns nothing.

## freeHL_NodeList

`void` **`freeHL_NodeList`**`(`*HL_NodeList* nodelist*`)`

Frees a complete node list from memory, along with all the nodes contained in it. The node list is given as the only argument.

Returns nothing.

## newHL_Group

`HL_Node*` **`newHL_Group`**`(`*const char* name*`)`

Creates an empty HL node of `Group` type. *name* is a string used to identify the node.

Returns the node if successful or *NULL* upon failure.

## newHL_Attribute

`HL_Node*` **`newHL_Attribute`**`(`*const char* name*`)`

Creates an empty HL node of `Attribute` type. *name* is a string used to identify the node.

Returns the node if successful or *NULL* upon failure.

## newHL_Dataset

`HL_Node*` **`newHL_Dataset`**`(`*const char* name*`)`

Creates an empty HL node of `Dataset` type. *name* is a string used to identify the node.

Returns the node if successful or *NULL* upon failure.

## newHL_Datatype

`HL_Node*` **`newHL_Datatype`**`(`*const char* name*`)`

Creates an empty HL node of `Datatype` type. *name* is a string used to identify the node.

Returns the node if successful or *NULL* upon failure.

## newHL_CompoundTypeAttribute

`HL_CompoundTypeAttribute*` **`newHL_CompoundTypeAttribute`** (*char*attrname,size_t offset, char* format,int ndims,size_t* dims*)

Creates a compound `Attribute` node. This function is used to read nodes which are not simple atomic types. It is designed to hold the `Attribute` in the form of `unsigned char*` along with information on how to interpret its contents.

Arguments:

*attrname*: String containing the `Attribute`'s name.

*offset*: The byte offset in the data where the `Attribute`'s value starts.

*format*: An atomic type, in character format, describing the `Attribute`, for example "`short`", or "`double`".

*ndims*: Number of dimensions in the `Attribute`'s array.

*dims*: The dimensions of each of *ndims*.

Returns the compound node if successful or *NULL* upon failure.

## newHL_CompoundTypeDescription

`HL_CompoundTypeDescription*` **`newHL_CompoundTypeDescription`** `()`

Creates a list containing *HL_CompoundTypeAttribute*s.

Returns the compound type list if successful or *NULL* upon failure.

## freeHL_CompoundTypeAttribute

`void` **`freeHL_CompoundTypeAttribute`** (*HL_CompoundTypeAttribute* attr*)

Frees a given compound type attribute from memory. The only argument is the *HL_CompoundTypeAttribute* to be freed.

Returns nothing.

## freeHL_CompoundTypeDescription

`void` **`freeHL_CompoundTypeDescription`** (*HL_CompoundTypeDescription* typelist*)

Frees the compound type list, along with all its members, from memory. The only argument is the *HL_CompoundTypeDescription* to be freed.

Returns nothing.

## addNode

`int` **`addNode`** (*HL_NodeList* nodelist, HL_Node* node*)

Appends a node to (the end of) a node list.

**Note:** If this operation is successful the responsibility for releasing the memory of the node *node* is taken by the nodelist, so do not release the *node* afterwards.

Arguments:

*nodelist*: The node list.

*node*: The node to append to *nodelist*.

Returns 1 if successful and 0 otherwise.

## getNode

`HL_Node*` **`getNode`** (*HL_NodeList* nodelist,const char* nodeName*)

Provides a reference to a node from a node list.

**Note:** A reference to the node is returned, so do not release the *node* when finished with the node.

Arguments:

*nodelist*: The node list.

*nodeName*: A string identifying the node to extract.

Returns (a reference to) the node if it is found, and *NULL* if not.

## setScalarValue

`int` **`setScalarValue`** (*HL_Node* node,size_t sz,unsigned char* value,const char* fmt,hid_t typid*)

Writes a scalar value to a node. Scalar values are individual atomic words.

Arguments:

*node*: The node in which to write the value.

*sz*: Size of the data type.

*value*: The value to write.

*fmt*: String representation of the data format, for example “`short`”, “`signed int`” or “`double`”.

*typid*: Reference to used data type. Must be set manually if using a compound data type, otherwise set it to -1.

Returns 1 if successful and 0 otherwise.

## setArrayValue

`int` **`setArrayValue`** (*HL_Node* node,size_t sz,int ndims,hsize_t* dims,unsigned char* value,const char* fmt,hid_t typid*)

Writes an array to a node.

Arguments:

*node*: The node in which to write the array.

*sz*: Size of the data type.

*ndims*: The number of dimensions of the array, which may range from 0 to 4.

*dims*: The dimensions of each of *ndims*.

*value*: The array to write.

*fmt*: String representation of the data format.

*typid*: Reference to used data type. Must be set manually if using a compound data type, otherwise set it to -1.

Returns 1 if successful and 0 otherwise.

## extractParentChildName

`int` **`extractParentChildName`** (*HL_Node* node, char* parent, char* child*)

Seperates the last node (the child) in a node name consisting of several nodes (the parent). For example, for a node name given as `/group1/group2/group3`, this function will set `/group1/group2` as the parent and `group3` as the child.

Arguments:

*node*: The node under scrutiny.

*parent*: A string to hold the parent's node name.

*child*: A string to hold the child's node name.

Returns 1 if successful and 0 otherwise.

### commitDatatype

`int` **`commitDatatype`** (*HL_Node* node,hid_t testStruct_hid*)

If a compound type has been created and there is a wish to have this node "named", then use this function for marking this node to be committed. See the HDF5 documentation for a more detailed description on what "committed" means.

Arguments:

*node*: A `Datatype` node to mark.

*testStruct_hid*: The HDF5 `hid_t` reference to the datatype.

Returns 1 if successful and 0 otherwise.

### scanNodeList

`void` **`scanNodeList`** (*HL_NodeList* nodelist*)

Prints the names in a node list to the terminal. The only argument is the node list.

Returns nothing.

### findCompoundTypeDescription

`HL_CompoundTypeDescription*` **`findCompoundTypeDescription`** (*HL_NodeList* nodelist, unsigned long objno0,unsigned long objno1*)

Searches a node list (*nodelist*) for all nodes with are identified by values *objno0* or *objno1*. Use this function to inquire wether an attribute's or dataset's type is "committed".

Returns an *HL_CompoundTypeDescription* list if any nodes are found, otherwise *NULL*.

### scanCompoundTypeDescription

`void` **`scanCompoundTypeDescription`** (*HL_CompoundTypeDescription* typelist*)

Prints to the terminal the names of all nodes in the *typelist* list of compound nodes.

Returns nothing.

## 4.2 Read functions

### readHL_NodeListFrom

`HL_NodeList*` **`readHL_NodeListFrom`** (*const char* filename, const char* fromPath*)

Recursively reads the HDF5 file *filename* from the group *fromPath* and builds a list of nodes with corresponding names. I.e. no data will be read at this step, just the nodetypes and names will be determined. Returns an `HL_NodeList` pointer upon success, otherwise NULL.

### readHL_NodeList

`HL_NodeList*` **`readHL_NodeList`** `(`*const char* filename*`)`

Recursively read the HDF5 file *filename* from the root group and builds a list of nodes with corresponding names. I.e. no data will be read at this step, just the nodetypes and names will be determined. Returns an `HL_NodeList` pointer upon success, otherwise NULL.

### selectNode

`int` **`selectNode`** `(`*HL_NodeList* nodelist, const char* name*`)`

Marks the node with name *name* in the *nodelist* for retrival. Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### selectAllNodes

`int` **`selectAllNodes`** `(`*HL_NodeList* nodelist*`)`

Marks all nodes in the *nodelist* for retrival. Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### fetchMarkedNodes

`int` **`fetchMarkedNodes`** `(`*HL_NodeList* nodelist*`)`

Reads all nodes in the *nodelist* that has been marked for retrival. Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### fillAttributeNode

`int` **`fillAttributeNode`** `(`*hid_t file_id, HL_Node* node*`)`

Fills the attribute node *node* with data and dimensions from the file referenced by *file_id*. Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### fillDatasetNode

`int` **`fillDatasetNode`** `(`*hid_t file_id, HL_Node* node*`)`

Fills the dataset node *node* with data and dimensions from the file referenced by *file_id*. Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### fillGroupNode

`int` **`fillGroupNode`** `(`*hid_t file_id, HL_Node* node*`)`

Fills the group node *node* with data from the file referenced by *file_id*. Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### fillTypeNode

`int` **`fillTypeNode`** `(`*hid_t file_id, HL_Node* node*`)`

Fills the type node *node* with data from the file referenced by *file_id*. Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### fillNodeWithData

`int` **`fillNodeWithData`** `(`*hid_t file_id, HL_Node* node*`)`

Fills the node *node* with data from the file referenced by *file_id*. Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### buildTypeDescriptionFromTypeHid

`HL_CompoundTypeDescription*` **`buildTypeDescriptionFromTypeHid`** `(`*hid_t type_id*`)`

Builds a compound type description from the type *type_id* reference.
Returns a `HL_CompoundTypeDescription` pointer upon success, otherwise NULL.

## 4.3 Write functions

### commitType

`herr_t` **`commitType`** `(`*hid_t loc_id, const char* name, hid_t type_id*`)`

Commits a datatype. See the HDF5 documentation for more detailed descriptions on what "committed" means.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: Where should the datatype be placed.

*name*: What should the datatype be called.

*type_id*: The `hid_t` reference to the datatype.

Returns a negative value upon failure, otherwise the operation was successful.

### createStringType

`hid_t` **`createStringType`** `(`*size_t length*`)`

Creates a HDF5 string type of length *length*. Returns a negative value upon failure, otherwise a `hid_t` reference to the datatype.

### setTypeSize

`herr_t` **`setTypeSize`** `(`*hid_t type_id,size_t theSize*`)`

Changes the size of the datatype referenced by *type_id* to the size *theSize*. Returns a negative value upon failure, otherwise the operation was successful.

### closeType

`herr_t` **`closeType`** `(`*hid_t type_id*`)`

Closes the datatype referenced by *type_id*. Returns a negative value upon failure, otherwise the operation was successful.

### writeScalarDataAttribute

`herr_t` **`writeScalarDataAttribute`** `(`*hid_t loc_id, hid_t type_id, const char* name, void* buf*`)`

Writes a scalar value to an HDF5 file.

Arguments: *loc_id*: The group or dataset the attribute should be written to.

*type_id*: The datatype of the attribute.

*name*: The name that should be used for the attribute.

*buf*: The data that should be written.

Returns 0 upon success, otherwise -1.

### writeScalarDataAttribute_fmt

`herr_t` **`writeScalarDataAttribute_fmt`** (*hid_t loc_id, const char* fmt, const char* name, void* buf*)

Writes a scalar value to an HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The group or dataset the attribute should be written to.

*fmt*: A string describing the format of the datatype, e.g. `char`, `short`, ...

*name*: The name that should be used for the attribute.

*buf*: The data that should be written.

Returns 0 upon success, otherwise -1.

### writeSimpleDataAttribute

`herr_t` **`writeSimpleDataAttribute`** (*hid_t loc_id, hid_t type_id, const char* name, int ndims, hsize_t* dims, void* buf*) Writes a simple data attribute value to an HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The group or dataset the attribute should be written to.

*type_id*: The datatype of the attribute.

*name*: The name that should be used for the attribute.

*ndims*: The rank of the data to be written, between 0-4.

*dims*: The dimensions of the data, a pointer to *ndims* number of `hsize_t` values.

*buf*: The data that should be written.

Returns 0 upon success, otherwise -1.

### writeSimpleDataAttribute_fmt

`herr_t` **`writeSimpleDataAttribute_fmt`** (*hid_t loc_id, const char* fmt, const char* name, int ndims, hsize_t* dims, void* buf*)

Writes a simple data attribute value to an HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The group or dataset the attribute should be written to.

*fmt*: A string describing the format of the datatype, e.g. `char`, `short`, ...

*name*: The name that should be used for the attribute.

*ndims*: The rank of the data to be written, between 0-4.

*dims*: The dimensions of the data, a pointer to *ndims* number of `hsize_t` values.

*buf*: The data that should be written.

Returns 0 upon success, otherwise -1.

### createSimpleDataset

`hid_t` **`createSimpleDataset`** (*hid_t loc_id, hid_t type_id, const char* name, int ndims, hsize_t* dims, void* buf, int compress*)

Creates a dataset in an HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The group the dataset should be created in.

*type_id*: The datatype of the dataset.

*name*: The name that should be used for the dataset.

*ndims*: The rank of the data to be written.

*dims*: The dimensions of the data, a pointer to *ndims* number of `hsize_t` values.

*buf*: The data to be written in the dataset, if NULL, an empty dataset will be created.

*compress*: The compression level on the dataset, betwen 0-9 where 0 is no compression and 9 is highest compression.

Returns -1 on failure, otherwise a `hid_t` reference to the dataset.

### createSimpleDataset_fmt

`hid_t` **`createSimpleDataset`** (*hid_t loc_id, const char* fmt, const char* name, int ndims, hsize_t* dims, void* buf, int compress*)

Creates a dataset in an HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The group the dataset should be created in.

*fmt*: A string describing the format of the datatype, e.g. `char`, `short`, ...

*name*: The name that should be used for the dataset.

*ndims*: The rank of the data to be written.

*dims*: The dimensions of the data, a pointer to *ndims* number of `hsize_t` values.

*buf*: The data to be written in the dataset, if NULL, an empty dataset will be created.

*compress*: The compression level on the dataset, betwen 0-9 where 0 is no compression and 9 is highest compression.

Returns -1 on failure, otherwise a `hid_t` reference to the dataset.

### closeDataset

`herr_t` **`closeDataset`** (*hid_t loc_id*)
Closes the dataset referenced by *loc_id*. Returns a negative value upon failiure, otherwise the operation was successful.

### createCompoundType

`hid_t` **`createCompoundType`** (*size_t size*)
Creates a compound type with the size *size*. Returns a negative value upon failiure, otherwise a `hid_t` reference.

### addAttributeToCompoundType

`herr_t` **`addAttributeToCompoundType`** (*hid_t loc_id, const char* name, size_t offset,hid_t type_id*)
Adds an scalar attribute to a compound type.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The type the attribute should be appended to,

*name*: The name of the attribute.

*offset*: At what offset in the data does this attribute begin.

*type_id*: The datatype of the attribute.

Returns a negative value upon failure, otherwise the operation was successful.

## addAttributeToCompoundType_fmt

`herr_t` **`addAttributeToCompoundType_fmt`** (*hid_t loc_id, const char* name, size_t offset,const char* fmt*)

Adds an scalar attribute to a compound type.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The type the attribute should be appended to.

*name*: The name of the attribute.

*offset*: At what offset in the data does this attribute begin.

*fmt*: A string describing the format of the datatype, e.g. `char`, `short`, ...

Returns a negative value upon failure, otherwise the operation was successful.

## addArrayToCompoundType

`herr_t` **`addArrayToCompoundType`** (*hid_t loc_id, const char* name, size_t offset, int ndims,size_t* dims,hid_t type_id*)

Adds an array attribute to a compound type.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The type the attribute should be appended to.

*name*: The name of the attribute.

*offset*: At what offset in the data does this attribute begin.

*ndims*: The rank of the data to be written, between 0-4.

*dims*: The dimensions of the data, a pointer to *ndims* number of `hsize_t` values.

*type_id*: The datatype of the attribute.

Returns a negative value upon failiure, otherwise the operation was successful.

## addArrayToCompoundType_fmt

`herr_t` **`addArrayToCompoundType_fmt`** (*hid_t loc_id, const char* name, size_t offset, int ndims, size_t* dims, const char* fmt*)

Adds an array attribute to a compound type.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The type the attribute should be appended to.

*name*: The name of the attribute.

*offset*: At what offset in the data does this attribute begin.

*ndims*: The rank of the data to be written, between 0-4.

*dims*: The dimensions of the data, a pointer to *ndims* number of `hsize_t` values.

*fmt*: A string describing the format of the datatype, e.g. `char`, `short`, ...

Returns a negative value upon failiure, otherwise the operation was successful.

### createGroup

`hid_t` **`createGroup`** (*hid_t loc_id, const char* groupname,const char* comment*)

Creates a group in an HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*loc_id*: The group or file reference the group should be written to.

*groupname*: The name of the group to be written.

*comment*: A comment of the group, if NULL, no comment will be added to the group.

Returns a negative value on failure, otherwise a `hid_t` reference.

### closeGroup

`herr_t` **`closeGroup`** (*hid_t loc_id*)

Closes a group referenced by *loc_id*. Returns a negative value upon failure, otherwise the operation was successful.

### doWriteHdf5Attribute

`int` **`doWriteHdf5Attribute`** (*hid_t rootGrp, HL_Node* parentNode, char* parentName, HL_Node* childNode, char* childName*)

Writes an `HL_Node` attribute to an HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*rootGrp*: The root group of the file.

*parentNode*: The parent node of the attribute to be written.

*parentName*: The name of the parent node.

*childNode*: The node to be written.

*childName*: The attribute's name.

Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### doWriteHdf5Group

`int` **`doWriteHdf5Group`** (*hid_t rootGrp, HL_Node* parentNode, char* parentName, HL_Node* childNode, char* childName*)

Writes an `HL_Node` group to an HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*rootGrp*: The root group of the file.

*parentNode*: The parent node of the group to be written.

*parentName*: The name of the parent node.

*childNode*: The node to be written.

*childName*: The group's name.

Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### doWriteHdf5Dataset

`int` **`doWriteHdf5Dataset`** (*hid_t rootGrp, HL_Node* parentNode, char* parentName, HL_Node* childNode, char* childName, int doCompress*)

Writes an `HL_Node` dataset to an HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*rootGrp*: The root group of the file.

*parentNode*: The parent node of the dataset to be written.

*parentName*: The name of the parent node.

*childNode*: The node to be written.

*childName*: The dataset's name.

*doCompress*: The compression level on the dataset, betwen 0-9 where 0 is no compression and 9 is highest compression.

Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### doCommitHdf5Datatype

`int` **`doCommitHdf5Datatype`** (*hid_t loc_id, HL_Node* parentNode, char* parentName, HL_Node* childNode, char* childName*)

Creates a "committed" datatype in the HDF5 file.

Arguments:

*rootGrp*: The root group of the file.

*parentNode*: The parent node of the datatype to be written.

*parentName*: The name of the parent node.

*childNode*: The node to be written.

*childName*: The datatype's name.

Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

### writeNodeList

`int` **`writeNodeList`** (*HL_NodeList* nodelist, int doCompress*)

Writes a nodelist in HDF5 format.

Arguments:

*nodelist*: The nodelist to be written.

*doCompress*: The compression level that should be used on the datasets, betwen 0-9 where 0 is no compression and 9 is highest compression.

Returns 1 upon success, otherwise 0.

## 4.4 Deprecated

Several functions are deprecated and are only provided for backward compatibility with alpha versions of this software which are actually being used. Avoid using these functions, since they will probably be removed in a future release.

### newGroup

`NameListGroup_t*` **`newGroup`** `(`*NameListGroup_t* parentGroup,const char* name*`)`

Creates a new group named *name* and attaches this group to the *parentGroup*. If the *parentGroup* is NULL, then the created group will be the root group. Returns the new group upon success or NULL upon failure.

### newDataset

`NameListDataset_t*` **`newDataset`** `(`*NameListGroup_t* parentGroup, const char* name*`)`

Creates a new dataset named *name* and attaches this dataset to the *parentGroup*. Returns the new dataset upon success or NULL upon failiure.

### newNameListType

`NameListType_t*` **`newNameListType`** `()`

Creates a new type object. Returns the allocated type upon success or NULL upon failure.

### newAttribute

`NameListAttribute_t*` **`newAttribute`** `(`*const char* name*`)`

Creates a new attribute with the name *name*, if *name* is NULL, then the attribute will be nameless. Returns the allocated attribute upon success or NULL upon failure.

### newCompoundAttribute

`CompoundAttributeDef_t*` **`newCompoundAttribute`** `(`*const char* name*`)`

Creates a new compound attribute definition with the name *name*, if *name* is NULL, then the attribute will be nameless. Returns the allocated compound attribute definition upon success or NULL upon failure.

### createCompoundFromType

`CompoundAttributeDef_t*` **`createCompoundFromType`** `(`*NameListType_t* inType, char* name*`)`

Translates an `NameListType_t` instance to a compound attribute definition instance and then gives the compound attribute definition the name *name*. Returns the allocated compound attribute definition upon success or NULL upon failure.

### addCompoundAttributeToType

`herr_t` **`addCompoundAttributeToType`** `(`*NameListType_t* newType,CompoundAttributeDef_t* compoundAttr*`)`

Adds the compound attribute definition *compoundAttr* to the name list type *newType*. Returns a value $\geq 0$ upon success, otherwise -1.

## addAttributeToGroup

`herr_t` **`addAttributeToGroup`** (*NameListGroup_t* group, NameListAttribute_t* attr*)
Adds the attribute *attr* to the group *group*. Returns 0 upon success otherwise -1.

## addAttributeToDataset

`herr_t` **`addAttributeToDataset`** (*NameListDataset_t* dset, NameListAttribute_t* attr*)
Adds the attribute *attr* to the dataset *dset*. Returns 0 upon success otherwise -1.

## freeCompoundAttribute

`void` **`freeCompoundAttribute`** (*CompoundAttributeDef_t* attr*)
Deallocates the compound attribute definition *attr*. Returns nothing.

## freeAttribute

`void` **`freeAttribute`** (*NameListAttribute_t* attr*)
Deallocates the attribute *attr*. Returns nothing.

## freeNameListType

`void` **`freeNameListType`** (*NameListType_t* type*)
Deallocates the name list type *type*. Returns nothing.

## freeInternalDataset

`void` **`freeInternalDataset`** (*NameListDataset_t* dset*)
Deallocates the internals for the dataset *dset*. Returns nothing.

## freeDataset

`void` **`freeDataset`** (*NameListDataset_t* dset*)
Deallocates the dataset *dset*. Returns nothing.

## addTypeToLocalGroup

`herr_t` **`addTypeToLocalGroup`** (*NameListGroup_t* group, NameListType_t* type*)
Adds the type *type* to the local list of types in the group *group*. Returns a value $\geq 0$ upon success otherwise -1.

## addTypeToGlobalGroup

`herr_t` **`addTypeToGlobalGroup`** (*NameListGroup_t* group, NameListType_t* type*)
Adds the type *type* to the global list of types in the group *group*. Returns a value $\geq 0$ upon success otherwise -1.

### doesTypeExistInGlobalGroup

`int` **`doesTypeExistInGlobalGroup`** (*NameListGroup_t* grp,unsigned long* objno*)

Searches the global list of types in the group *grp* if any occurence of the *objno* exists.

Arguments:

*grp*: The group that should be searched in.

*objno*: An list of two `unsigned long`'s.

Returns the index number in the global list if an occurance was found otherwise -1.

### doesTypeExistInLocalGroup

`int` **`doesTypeExistInLocalGroup`** (*NameListGroup_t* grp,unsigned long* objno*)

Searches the local list of types in the group *grp* if any occurence of the *objno* exists.

Arguments:

*grp*: The group that should be searched in.

*objno*: A list of two `unsigned long`'s.

Returns the index number in the local list if an occurance was found otherwise -1.

### removeTypeFromLocalGroup

`NameListType_t*` **`removeTypeFromLocalGroup`** (*NameListGroup_t* group,unsigned long* objno*)

Removes the type with a matching *objno* from the group *group*'s list of local types and returns the type.

Arguments:

*group*: The group that should be searched.

*objno*: A list of two `unsigned long`'s.

Returns the type with a matching object number if it was found, otherwise NULL

### removeTypeFromGlobalGroup

`NameListType_t*` **`removeTypeFromGlobalGroup`** (*NameListGroup_t* group,unsigned long* objno*)

Removes the type with a matching *objno* from the group *group*'s list of global types and returns the type.

Arguments:

*group*: The group that should be searched.

*objno*: A list of two `unsigned long`'s.

Returns the type with a matching object number if it was found, otherwise NULL

### displayDataBuffer

`void` **`displayDataBuffer`** (*unsigned char* data, const char*fmt, int ndims, hsize_t* dims, size_t typeSize, int offs, int addNewline*)

Displays the data in a format similar to the one produced when using **h5dump** distributed with the HDF5 distribution.

Arguments:

*data*: A pointer to the data.

*fmt*: The hlhdf string representation of the dataformat.

*ndims*: The rank of the data.

*dims*: The dimensions of the data.

*typeSize*: The size of each value.

*offs*: The number of blanks that should be padded before the data.

*addNewline*: If a linebreak should be added or not, 1 means add linebreak.

Returns nothing.

## displayCompoundDataset

`void` **`displayCompoundDataset`**`(`*unsigned char* data,NameListType_t* type,int ndims, hsize_t* dims, int offs*`)`

Displays a compound dataset in a format similar to the one produced when using **h5dump** distributed with the HDF5 distribution.

Arguments:

*data*: The data pointer.

*type*: The compound type definition.

*ndims*: The rank of the data.

*dims*: The dimensions of the data.

*offs*: The number of blanks that should be padded before the data.

Returns nothing

## displayCompoundAttributeDef

`void` **`displayCompoundAttributeDef`**`(`*CompoundAttributeDef_t* def,int offs*`)`

Displays one attribute in a compound attribute in a format similar to the one produced when using **h5dump** distributed with the HDF5 distribution.

Arguments:

*def*: The compound attribute definition.

*offs*: The number of blanks that should be padded before the data.

Returns nothing

## displayType

`void` **`displayType`**`(`*NameListType_t* type, int offs*`)`

Displays one datatype in a format similar to the one produced when using **h5dump** distributed with the HDF5 distribution.

Arguments:

*type*: The datatype to display.

*offs*: The number of blanks that should be padded before the data.

Returns nothing.

### displayAttribute

`void` **`displayAttribute`** `(`*NameListAttribute_t* attr,int offs*`)`

Displays one attribute in a format similar to the one produced when using **h5dump** distributed with the HDF5 distribution.

Arguments:

*attr*: The attribute to display.

*offs*: The number of blanks that should be padded before the data.

Returns nothing.

### displayDataset

`void` **`displayDataset`** `(`*NameListDataset_t* dset, int offs*`)`

Displays one dataset in a format similar to the one produced when using **h5dump** distributed with the HDF5 distribution.

Arguments:

*dset*: The dataset to display.

*offs*: The number of blanks that should be padded before the data.

Returns nothing.

### displayGroup

`void` **`displayGroup`** `(`*NameListGroup_t* grp,int offs*`)`

Displays one group in a format similar to the one produced when using **h5dump** distributed with the HDF5 distribution. This function will recursively go through all sub-groups belonging to this group.

Arguments:

*grp*: The group to display.

*offs*: The number of blanks that should be padded before the data.

Returns nothing.

### readHlHdfFile

`NameListGroup_t*` **`readHlHdfFile`** `(`*const char* filename*`)`

Recursively reads a complete HDF5 file with name *filename* and builds a complete tree structure. Returns a pointer to a `NameListGroup_t` instance upon success, otherwise NULL.

### readHlHdfFileFrom

`NameListGroup_t*` **`readHlHdfFileFrom`** `(`*const char* filename, const char* from*`)`

Recursively reads an HDF5 file with name *filename* from the group *from* and builds a complete tree structure. Returns a pointer to a `NameListGroup_t` instance upon success, otherwise NULL.

### read_hlhdf_free

`void` **`read_hlhdf_free`** `(`*NameListGroup_t* group*`)`

Frees a HDF5 tree structure that has been read by using either **readHlHdfFile** or **readHlHdfFileFrom**. Be aware that this function must be used if one of the two functions above was used since it knows how the tree structure was built. Returns nothing.

CHAPTER

**FIVE**

# Creating your own HDF5 product

When creating your own HDF5 product, there are two header files that should be included, **read_vhlhdf.h** and **write_vhlhdf.h**.

When compiling a binary, there are three libraries that must be linked in; these are **libhlhdf.a**, **libhdf5.a** and **libz.a**. It is also possible to link the shared library **libhdf5.so** instead of **libhdf5.a**.

The HL-HDF package was installed with a hldef.mk file that can be included in your own Makefile in order to get the correct paths to both the zlib and the hdf5 library. It also contains information on which C-compiler the HL-HDF package was compiled with and some other goodies.

A simple Makefile could look like this:

```
include /usr/local/hlhdf/mkf/hldef.mk

HLHDF_INCDIR = -I/usr/local/hlhdf/include
HLHDF_LIBDIR = -L/usr/local/hlhdf/lib

CFLAGS = $(OPTS) $(DEFS) -I. $(ZLIB_INCDIR) $(HDF5_INCDIR) \
         $(HLHDF_INCDIR)

LDFLAGS = -L. $(ZLIB_LIBDIR) $(HDF5_LIBDIR) $(HLHDF_LIBDIR)

LIBS = -lhlhdf -lhdf5 -lz -lm

TARGET=myTestProgram
SOURCES=test_program.c
OBJECTS=$(SOURCES:.c=.o)

all: $(TARGET)

$(TARGET): $(OBJECTS)
           $(CC) -o $@ $(LDFLAGS) $(OBJECTS) $(LIBS)

clean:
           @\rm -f *.o *~ so_locations core

distclean: clean
           @\rm -f $(TARGET)

distribution:
           @echo "Would bring the latest revision upto date"

install:
           @$(HL_INSTALL) -f -o -C $(TARGET) ${MY_BIN_PATH}/$(TARGET)
```

Now, when the Makefile has been created, it might be a good idea to write your own HDF5 product. The following example will create a dataset with a two-dimensional array of integers, and two attributes connected to this dataset. It will also create a group containing one attribute.

```
#include <read_vhlhdf.h>
#include <write_vhlhdf.h>

int main(int argc, char** argv)
{
  HL_NodeList* aList=NULL;
  HL_Node* aNode=NULL;
  int* anArray=NULL;
  int anIntValue;
  float aFloatValue;
  hsize_t dims[]={10,10};
  int npts=100;
  int i;

  initHlHdf();  /* Initialize the HL-HDF library */
  debugHlHdf(2); /* Activate debugging */

  if(!(aList = newHL_NodeList())) {
    fprintf(stderr,"Failed to allocate nodelist");
    goto fail;
  }

  if(!(anArray = malloc(sizeof(int)*npts))) {
    fprintf(stderr,"Failed to allocate memory for array.");
    goto fail;
  }
  for(i=0;i<npts;i++)
    anArray[i]=i;

  addNode(aList,(aNode = newHL_Group("/group1")));
  addNode(aList,(aNode = newHL_Attribute("/group1/attribute1")));
  anIntValue=10;
  setScalarValue(aNode,sizeof(anIntValue),(unsigned char*)&anIntValue,"int",-1);

  addNode(aList,(aNode = newHL_Dataset("/dataset1")));
  setArrayValue(aNode,sizeof(int),2,dims,(unsigned char*)anArray,"int",-1);

  addNode(aList,(aNode = newHL_Attribute("/dataset1/attribute2")));
  anIntValue=20;
  setScalarValue(aNode,sizeof(anIntValue),(unsigned char*)&anIntValue,"int",-1);

  addNode(aList,(aNode = newHL_Attribute("/dataset1/attribute3")));
  aFloatValue=99.99;
  setScalarValue(aNode,sizeof(aFloatValue),(unsigned char*)&aFloatValue,
               "float",-1);

  strcpy(aList->filename,"written_hdffile.hdf");
  writeNodeList(aList,6);

  freeHL_NodeList(aList);
  exit(0);
  return 0; /* Won't come here */
 fail:
  freeHL_NodeList(aList);
  exit(1);
  return 1; /* Won't come here */
}
```

When you have created your own HDF5 product, it might be a good idea to create some code for reading this file and checking its contents.

```
#include <read_vhlhdf.h>
#include <write_vhlhdf.h>

int main(int argc, char** argv)
{
  HL_NodeList* aList=NULL;
  HL_Node* aNode=NULL;
  int* anArray=NULL;
  int anIntValue;
  float aFloatValue;
  int npts;
  int i;

  initHlHdf();  /* Initialize the HL-HDF library */
  debugHlHdf(2); /* Activate debugging */

  if(!(aList = readHL_NodeList("written_hdffile.hdf"))) {
    fprintf(stderr,"Failed to read nodelist\n");
    goto fail;
  }

  selectAllNodes(aList);  /* Select everything for retrival */

  fetchMarkedNodes(aList);

  if((aNode = getNode(aList,"/group1")))
    printf("%s exists\n",aNode->name);

  if((aNode = getNode(aList,"/group1/attribute1"))) {
    memcpy(&anIntValue,aNode->data,aNode->dSize);
    printf("%s exists and have value %d\n",aNode->name,anIntValue);
  }

  if((aNode = getNode(aList,"/dataset1"))) {
    anArray = (int*)aNode->data;
    npts = 1;
    for(i=0;i<aNode->ndims;i++)
      npts*=aNode->dims[i];
    printf("%s exists and has the values:\n",aNode->name);
    for(i=0;i<npts;i++) {
      printf("%d ", anArray[i]);
      if((i%aNode->dims[0])==0) {
        printf("\n");
      }
    }
    printf("\n");
  }
```

continued on next page ...

```
  if((aNode = getNode(aList,"/dataset1/attribute2"))) {
    memcpy(&anIntValue,aNode->data,aNode->dSize);
    printf("%s exists and have the value %d\n",aNode->name,anIntValue);
  }

  if((aNode = getNode(aList,"/dataset1/attribute3"))) {
    memcpy(&aFloatValue,aNode->data,aNode->dSize);
    printf("%s exists and have the value %f\n",aNode->name,aFloatValue);
  }
  freeHL_NodeList(aList);
  exit(0);
  return 0; /* Never reached */
 fail:
  freeHL_NodeList(aList);
  exit(1);
  return 1; /* Never reached */
}
```

CHAPTER

**SIX**

# Example Programs

Three example programs have been provided with HL-HDF. Two of them are modelled after the BUFR software developed and maintained by the EUMETNET Operational Programme for the Exchange of Weather Radar Information (OPERA). This software has two programs called 'encbufr' and 'decbufr' used to encode and decode BUFR messages to/from an ASCII file containing header information and raw data in a binary file. The third example is modelled after a program called 'griblist' developed by SMHI to query the contents of a GRIB file. GRIB and BUFR are format standards specified by the World Meteorological Organization.

## 6.1 hlenc

Encodes raw binary data in one file and an ASCII file containing header information, into an HDF5 file.

**hlenc [-hdv ] [-z compression ] -i inputprefix -o outputfile**

[*-h* ] Prints a help text.

[*-d* ] Prints debugging information.

[*-v* ] Prints the version number.

[*-z compression* ] Sets the compression level, can be in the range `0` to `9` where `0` is no compression and `9` is the highest compression.

*-i inputprefix* Specifies the prefix for the input files, the files that will be read are <inputprefix>.info and <inputprefix>.data.

*-o outputfile* Specifies the name of the HDF5 file to be generated.

The file with extension .info should have the following apperance:
DATATYPE: [ATTRIBUTE or DATASET ]
FIELDNAME: [name of the field, e.g. '/attr1' ]
DATASIZE: [size of the datatype in bytes ]
DATAFORMAT: [string representation of the datatype, e.g. int ]
DIMS: [the dimension of the data embraced by [], e.g. [10,10] ]

The file with extension .data should contain raw binary data with native byte order.

## 6.2 hldec

Decodes an HDF5 file into a binary data file and an ASCII info file.

**hldec [-hdv ] -i inputfile -f fieldname -o outputprefix**

[*-h* ] Prints an help text.

[*-d* ] Prints debugging information.

[*-v* ] Prints the version number.

*-i inputfile* Specifies the HDF5 file to be decoded.

*-f fieldname* Specifies the fieldname to be decoded, e.g. '/dataset1'.

*-o outputprefix* Specifies the prefix for the output files, the files that will be generated are <outputprefix>.info and <outputprefix>.data.

The file with extension .info will get the following apperance:
DATATYPE: [ATTRIBUTE or DATASET ]
FIELDNAME: [name of the field, e.g. '/attr1' ]
DATASIZE: [size of the datatype in bytes ]
DATAFORMAT: [string representation of the datatype, e.g. int ]
DIMS: [the dimension of the data embraced by [], e.g. [10,10] ]

The file with extension .data will be saved in byteformat with native byte order.

## 6.3 hllist

Lists the nodes in an HDF5 file.

**hllist [-hdv ] hdf5file**

[*-h* ] Prints a help text.

[*-d* ] Prints debugging information.

[*-v* ] Prints the version number.

*hdf5file* Is the HDF5 file to be listed.

CHAPTER

SEVEN

# Python Interface - PyHL

PyHL is just like the HL-HDF library in that it allows the user to work with HDF5 at a high level. PyHL is designed to work at the highest level of abstraction using the Python programming language, since Python allows the user to interact directly with HDF5 files. In fact, PyHL is nothing more than a wrapper around HL-HDF but with some additional functionality which is only available in very high level languages such as Python. Like HL-HDF, it is up to the user to define appropriate ways of representing data and using the building blocks available in PyHL to store the data in HDF5.

(PyHL is pronounced "pile", which is an appropriate description of a heirarchy . . . )

## 7.1 Compilation and installation

The Python programming language, version 1.5.2, is required along with the `Numeric` package. Python is found at the Corporation for National Research Initiatives at http://www.python.org/ and `Numeric` is found at the Source Forge http://numpy.sourceforge.net/.

## 7.2 Create module _pyhl

If the configure script was not called with `--with-python=no` the _pyhl module should be compiled together with the rest of the code. If the configure script was called with `--with-python=no`, then the best thing is to rebuild the whole HL-HDF package (with `--with-python=yes`) and installation as descriped in Sections 2.2 and 2.4.

**NOTE:** *Python version 1.5.2 is required to compile _pyhl; otherwise there will be unresolved symbols. Also, be aware that the hdf5 library is linked dynamically which requires that the* `LD_LIBRARY_PATH` *contains the path to where libhdf5.so has been installed.*

## 7.3 Library Reference

This module defines the IO access for reading/writing HDF5 files. The module implements two classes for building an HDF5 file representation. The `nodelist` class implements a list that should represent the file itself. The `node` class represents the items in the HDF5 file. The `nodelist` contain several `node`'s for building the HDF5 file. You can use this interface to write Python programs that interfact with HDF5 files.

The module defines the following items:

**`is_file_hdf5`** (*filename*)
    Checks whether *filename* is an HDF5 file. Returns 1 if it is and 0 otherwise.

**nodelist**()
: Return a new instance of the `nodelist` class.

**node**(*nodetype,nodename*)
: Return a new instance of the `node`. The *nodetype* can be one of: `ATTRIBUTE_ID`, `DATASET_ID`, `GROUP_ID` and `TYPE_ID`. The *nodename* is the name of the node, for example `/group1/group2/dataset1`.

**ATTRIBUTE_ID**
: When creating a `node` and using this value, the node will become an attribute node.

**DATASET_ID**
: When creating a `node` and using this value, the node will become a dataset node.

**GROUP_ID**
: When creating a `node` and using this value, the node will become a group node.

**TYPE_ID**
: When creating a `node` and using this value, the node will become a datatype node.

**read_nodelist**(*filename*[*,from* ])
: Read the HDF5 file *filename* and build a `nodelist` with all the names. That is the data will not be read, just the names. If a nodelist is built from a group lower down in the hierarchy, then *from* can be specified. If all goes well, the `nodelist` is returned, otherwise an exception is thrown.

## nodelist

`nodelist` instances have the following methods:

**write**(*filename*[*,compression* ])
: Write the instance to disk in HDF5 format. The default compression value is `6`. If another compression level is wanted, then the value can be between `0` for no compression and `9` for highest compression.

**addNode**(*node*)
: Adds a node of class `node` to the end of the nodelist.

**getNodeNames**()
: Returns a dictionary with all the nodelists' node names as keys and the integer values `ATTRIBUTE_ID`, `DATASET_ID`, `TYPE_ID` and `GROUP_ID` as items.

**selectAll**()
: Marks all nodes in the nodelist for data retrival.

**selectNode**(*nodename*)
: Marks the node specified by *nodename* to be retrived.

**fetch**()
: Fetches all nodes in the selected nodelist.

**getNode**(*nodename*)
: Return the node with name *nodename*.

## node

A `node` has the following methods:

**setScalarValue**(*itemSize,data,typename,lhid*)
: Sets a scalar value in the `node` instance. *itemSize* is used for specifying the size of the value in bytes. It is not necessary to specify unless a compound type is set. *data* is the data to be set in the node. *typename* is the string representation of the datatype, for example `int`, `string`, `compound`, ... *lhid* is the `hid_t` reference to the datatype, is not nessecary to specify unless a compound type is set.

*NOTE: If the data to be set is of compound type, then the data should be of string type.*

**`setArrayValue`**(*itemSize,dims,data,typename,lhid*)
Sets an array value in the `node` instance. *itemSize* is used for specifying the size of the value in bytes. It is not nessecary to specify unless a compound type is set. *dims* is a list of dimensions of the data. *data* is the data to be set in the node. *typename* is the string representation of the datatype, for example `int`, `string`, `compound`, . . . *lhid* is the `hid_t` reference to the datatype, is not nessecary to specify unless a compound type should be set.

*NOTE: If the data to be set is of compound type, the data should be of string type.*

**`commit`**(*datatype*)
Marks a `TYPE_ID` node to be committed. *datatype* is the `hid_t` reference to the datatype.

**`name`**()
Returns the name of the `node` instance.

**`dims`**()
Returns a list of the dimensions of the `node` instance

**`format`**()
Returns the string representation of the `node`'s datatype.

**`data`**()
Returns the data of the `node` instance.

*NOTE: If the data is of compound type, the data will be returned as a string.*

## 7.4 Examples

The creation of HDF5 files with PyHL is quite easy, and there are not to many things one has to know about the HDF5 internals. However, in order to build an HDF5 file, one has to understand that the file should be built sequentialy, i.e. it is not possible to create a subgroup to a group before the group has been created. Neither is it possible to create an attribute or a dataset in a group before the group has been created etc. In other words, always create the top nodes before trying to create nodes under them in the heirarchy.

Another thing to bear in mind is that when the method `addNode` has been called the `nodelist` instance will take control over the node, so it will not be possible to alter the node after a call to `addNode` has been made.

When working with compound types, remember that the data that is passed to `setScalarValue` and `setArrayValue` must be a Python string. Also when working with compound types, the `itemSize` and `lhid` has to be passed on, otherwise the compound data most likely will be corrupted.

Also when working with compound types, be aware that the hdf5 library has to be linked dynamically, otherwise it will not be possible to pass the `hid_t` references between the Python modules.

Time to look at some simple examples. Comments will be written in *italics* and the actual code will be written in **bold face**.

### Writing a simple HDF5 file

**import _pyhl**

**from Numeric import ***

*# Create an empty node list instance*
**aList = _pyhl.nodelist()**

*# Create an group called info*
**aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.GROUP_ID,"/info")**

*# Add the node to the nodelist*
*# Remember that the nodelist takes responsibility*
**aList.addNode(aNode)**

*# Insert the attribute xscale in the group "/info"*
**aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.ATTRIBUTE_ID,"/info/xscale")**

*# Set the value to a double with value 10.0*
*# Note the -1's that has been used since the data not is compound*
**aNode.setScalarValue(-1,10.0,"double",-1)**
**aList.addNode(aNode)**

*# Similar for yscale,xsize and ysize*
**aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.ATTRIBUTE_ID,"/info/yscale")**
**aNode.setScalarValue(-1,20.0,"double",-1)**
**aList.addNode(aNode)**
**aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.ATTRIBUTE_ID,"/info/xsize")**
**aNode.setScalarValue(-1,10,"int",-1)**
**aList.addNode(aNode)**
**aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.ATTRIBUTE_ID,"/info/ysize")**
**aNode.setScalarValue(-1,10,"int",-1)**
**aList.addNode(aNode)**

*# Add a description*
**aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.ATTRIBUTE_ID,"/info/description")**
**aNode.setScalarValue(-1,"This is a simple example","string",-1)**
**aList.addNode(aNode)**

*# Add an array of data*
**myArray = arange(100)**
**myArray = array(myArray.astype('i'),'i')**
**myArray = reshape(myArray,(10,10))**
**aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.DATASET_ID,"/data")**

*# Set the data as an array, note the list with [10,10] which*
*# Indicates that it is an array of 10x10 items*
**aNode.setArrayValue(-1,[10,10],myArray,"int",-1)**
**aList.addNode(aNode)**

*# And now just write the file as "simple_test.hdf" with*
*# Compression level 9 (highest compression)*
**aList.write("simple_test.hdf",9)**

When checking this file with h5dump, the command syntax would be:

```
prompt% h5dump simple_test.hdf
```

And the result would be:

```
HDF5 "simple_test.hdf" {
GROUP "/" {
   DATASET "data" {
      DATATYPE { H5T_STD_I32LE }
      DATASPACE { SIMPLE ( 10, 10 ) / ( 10, 10 ) }
      DATA {
         0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,
         10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19,
         20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29,
         30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39,
         40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49,
         50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59,
         60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69,
         70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79,
         80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89,
         90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99
      }
   }
   GROUP "info" {
      ATTRIBUTE "xscale" {
         DATATYPE { H5T_IEEE_F64LE }
         DATASPACE { SCALAR }
         DATA {
            10
         }
      }
      ATTRIBUTE "yscale" {
         DATATYPE { H5T_IEEE_F64LE }
         DATASPACE { SCALAR }
         DATA {
            20
         }
      }
      ATTRIBUTE "xsize" {
         DATATYPE { H5T_STD_I32LE }
         DATASPACE { SCALAR }
         DATA {
            10
         }
      }
      ATTRIBUTE "ysize" {
         DATATYPE { H5T_STD_I32LE }
         DATASPACE { SCALAR }
         DATA {
            10
         }
      }
      ATTRIBUTE "description" {
         DATATYPE {
            { STRSIZE 25;
              STRPAD H5T_STR_NULLTERM;
              CSET H5T_CSET_ASCII;
              CTYPE H5T_C_S1;
            }
         }
         DATASPACE { SCALAR }
         DATA {
            "This is a simple example"
         }
      }
   }
}
```

### Writing an HDF5 file containing a compound datatype

This is a bit more complex since it requires the implementation of a Python C-module that contains the datatype definition, and a couple of methods for converting data to a string and the other way around.

There is a small example located in the 'hlhdf/pyhl' directory called 'rave_info_type' which implements a small compound type definition. Basically this module defines an object containing *xscale*, *yscale*,*xsize* and *ysize* variables. This module has also got a type class which should be used.

```
import _pyhl
import _rave_info_type

# Create the rave info HDF5 type
typedef = _rave_info_type.type()

# Create the rave info HDF5 object
obj = _rave_info_type.object()

# Set the values
obj.xsize=10
obj.ysize=10
obj.xscale=150.0
obj.yscale=150.0

aList = _pyhl.nodelist()

# Create a datatype node
aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.TYPE_ID,"/MyDatatype")

# Make the datatype named
aNode.commit(typedef.hid())
aList.addNode(aNode)

# Create an attribute containing the compound type
aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.ATTRIBUTE_ID,"/myCompoundAttribute")

# Note that I use both itemSize and lhid
# Also note how I translate the compound object to a string
aNode.setScalarValue(typedef.size(),obj.tostring(),"compound",typedef.hid())
aList.addNode(aNode)

# Better create a dataset also with the compound type
obj.xsize=1
obj.ysize=1
aNode = _pyhl.node(_pyhl.DATASET_ID,"/myCompoundDataset")

# I use setArrayValue instead
aNode.setArrayValue(typedef.size(),[1],obj.tostring(),"compound",typedef.hid())
aList.addNode(aNode)

# And finally write the HDF5 file.
aList.write("compound_test.hdf")
```

When checking this file with h5dump, the command syntax would be:

```
prompt% h5dump compound_test.hdf
```

And the result would be:

```
HDF5 "compound_test.hdf" {
GROUP "/" {
   ATTRIBUTE "myCompoundAttribute" {
      DATATYPE {
         H5T_STD_I32LE "xsize";
         H5T_STD_I32LE "ysize";
         H5T_IEEE_F64LE "xscale";
         H5T_IEEE_F64LE "yscale";
      }
      DATASPACE { SCALAR }
      DATA {
         {
            [ 10 ],
            [ 10 ],
            [ 150 ],
            [ 150 ]
         }
      }
   }
   DATATYPE "MyDatatype" {
      H5T_STD_I32LE "xsize";
      H5T_STD_I32LE "ysize";
      H5T_IEEE_F64LE "xscale";
      H5T_IEEE_F64LE "yscale";
   }
   DATASET "myCompoundDataset" {
      DATATYPE {
         "/MyDatatype"
      }
      DATASPACE { SIMPLE ( 1 ) / ( 1 ) }
      DATA {
         {
            [ 1 ],
            [ 1 ],
            [ 150 ],
            [ 150 ]
         }
      }
   }
}
}
```

## Reading a simple HDF5 file

The following example code will read the */info/xscale*, */info/yscale* and */data* fields from the HDF5 file 'simple_test.hdf'.

**import _pyhl**

*# Read the file*
aList = _pyhl.read_nodelist("simple_test.hdf")

*# Select individual nodes, instead of all of them*
**aList.selectNode("/info/xscale")**
**aList.selectNode("/info/yscale")**
**aList.selectNode("/data")**

*# Fetch the data for selected nodes*
**aList.fetch()**

*# Print the data*
**aNode = aList.getNode("/info/xscale")**
**print "XSCALE=" + 'aNode.data()'**
**aNode = aList.getNode("/info/yscale")**
**print "YSCALE=" + 'aNode.data()'**
**aNode = aList.getNode("/data")**
**print "DATA=" + 'aNode.data()'**

## Reading an HDF5 file containing a compound type

This example shows how an HDF5 file containing a compound type in it can be read. It will read the file "compound_test.hdf" that was generated above.

**import _pyhl**
**import _rave_info_type**

*# There is no meaning creating the type*
**obj = _rave_info_type.object()**
**aList = _pyhl.read_nodelist("compound_test.hdf")**

*# Select everything for retrival*
**aList.selectAll()**
**aList.fetch()**
**aNode = aList.getNode("/myCompoundAttribute")**

*# Translate from the string representation to object*
**obj.fromstring(aNode.data())**

*# Display the values*
**print "XSIZE="+'obj.xsize'**
**print "YSIZE="+'obj.ysize'**
**print "XSCALE="+'obj.xscale'**
**print "YSCALE="+'obj.yscale'**